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ABSTRACT

A study of high school group counseling examined diversity of therapeutic outcome in relation to (a) subject characteristics (race, sex, and exemplary-marginal school status) and (b) counselor training. Counseling produced differential changes in self-efficacy, trust, and coping approach, for different subject groups, with trained counselors producing more diverse changes. (Author)

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The Diversity of Therapeutic Change

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Our conceptualizations of therapy and therapeutic change have for the most part held that therapy moves everyone in one direction toward one universal state of well-being. Researchers have asked what therapy and which therapist are suited for which client. Yet, they have not gone on to study whether there are different positive patterns of therapeutic change and different positive therapeutic outcomes for different individuals. In contrast, it was our hypothesis that there is a general competence configuration but that it differs for people in different life situations. Further, counselors working with groups will produce greater subject heterogeneity, not greater homogeneity, with training and experience. Tyler (1973) has conceptualized adolescent psychosocial development as involving the development of identity in an Eriksonian sense, as growing out of an effectance motivation configuration (slide 1) of self-efficacy, trust, and an active planful coping style. This development is seen as psychosocial, and the nature of that configuration and its course of change for each individual are predicted to be a function of his/her way of coping, (slide 2), and life situation factors - race, sex, and group - as well as a function of the therapist's experience and training (slide 3).

We investigated this hypothesis using a three-stage program development/ program evaluation design. In the first stage, high school group counselors counseled students using their own approaches. In the second, staff and counselors designed an improved counseling approach based on the findings from

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the first two phases and integrating the hypothesized conception of competence. In the third and fourth phases, counselors counseled students utilizing this new approach.

Method

Subjects were 222 high school students participating in a study of the efficacy of a group counseling program. It was possible, due to the nature of this study (as shown in slide 2): (a) to investigate the competence characteristics and change patterns of students identified by counselors as exemplary (i.e., "getting their lives together well"), as well as those identified as marginal (i.e., having substantial difficulties in getting their lives together), and (b) (as shown in slide 3), to balance each eight-person group for racial (black, white) and sexual characteristics. The configuration was measured by a battery of self-report measures ranging from the most abstract, self-efficacy (Rotter I-E), to internal-external attribution in regard to race prejudice (Gurin I-E), to interpersonal trust (Rotter Trust), to social approval orientation (Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability Scale), to coping style (Tyler Behavior Attributes of Psychosocial Competence), to behaviorally anchored goal attainment (Kiresuk-Sherman Goal Attainment Scale). Measures were obtained before and after an eight-week group counseling intervention.

Results

Major results included:

(a) Precounseling differences in score levels: (slide 4), (1) group differences--exemplary students were more active copers and more internal than marginals; (MANOVA $f=2.13$, $p<.06$; Univariates, BAPC $f=5.38$, $p<.02$; RIE $f=6.07$,

$p < .02$); (2) race differences--blacks were more active copers, higher on Social Desirability, and more system blaming with regard to racial discrimination; (MANOVA $f=8.22$, $p < .001$; Univariates; BAPC $f=5.74$, $p < .02$, Social Desirability $f=3.57$, $p < .06$; Gurin I-E $f=25.89$, $p < .001$; and (3) one group x race interaction--marginal blacks are the most active copers, with marginal whites least active, and both exemplary groups closer to the blacks. Exemplary and marginal blacks are approximately equal and in the middle. MANOVA $f=2.29$, $p < .05$; Univariates, BAPC $f=8.31$, $p < .004$; RIE $f=6.28$, $p < .01$).

(b) Precounseling correlational differences: For marginals, the coping style configuration was based primarily on a correlation among BAPC, Trust, and Social Desirability measures--internality-externality and the Gurin were not involved. For exemplaries, the organizing variables were BAPC, Rotter I-E, Social Desirability and Trust. The Gurin was not significantly involved.

(c) Changes as a function of the counseling experience: (1) across the competence variables exemplary students gained more (MANOVA) than marginal students, with all the variables contributing, but none significantly by itself. (2) other patterns of change reflected life situation characteristics and precounseling differences. For example, blacks entered counseling significantly higher than whites on both BAPC and Social Desirability. Over counseling, blacks decreased on both, while whites increased. (3) there were also race by group patterns of change involving self-efficacy and student-rated behavioral goal attainment (slide 5). Specifically, two of the subgroups, marginal blacks and exemplary whites, lost in sense of self-efficacy but showed significantly greater gains on their behavioral goals. The other two subgroups, marginal white and exemplary blacks, became more internal with counseling but gained

less on their behavioral goals. Thus, during this fixed and delimited period of change for the students, these two interactions seemingly reflect that focus on an internal gain in self-efficacy occurs at the expense of an external gain on behavioral activities--and vice versa. It should be noted that these goal attainment differentials are reflected also in the counselor's ratings of student goal attainment. However, for those counselor ratings, the interaction is not statistically significant.

(d) Finally, to test the hypothesis of increased heterogeneity of change in groups of counselors who helped to develop and who were trained in the psychosocial competence group counseling approach, we compared change patterns in two groups of students. The counselors were balanced for experience in that each had had one semester of prior experience working with the group counseling project. Findings supported the heterogeneity hypothesis. (1) comparisons of change by students in phase 2 with those in phase 4, yielded an overall phase difference (MANOVA $f=2.046$, $p<.08$) and univariate differences on Social Desirability ($f=5.914$, $p<.02$) and Rotter I-E ($f=5.662$, $p<.02$). It also yielded phase x sex, phase x group, race x phase, and one phase x sex x race differences. Of these the most marked is the race x phase difference. To determine whether the greater diversity of change was occurring in phase 4 as hypothesized, post covary pre MANOVAs were run for each phase separately. No differential effects were formed for phase 2. For phase 4, significant race effects were found for change patterns on systems blame about prejudice on social desirability orientation, and on coping style. (MANOVA $f=3.395$, $p<.008$; Univariates, Gurin $f=5.889$, $p<.02$; Soc. Des. $f=7.533$, $p<.002$; BAPC $f=4.637$, $p<.034$). Thus, there seems to be more diversified change in phase 4.

Discussion

These results represent only one interrelated subset of findings from this large scale study. As such they can only serve to illustrate the complexity of the personal and cultural factors which individuals bring to a therapeutic interaction and which influence how those individuals change from that interaction. Thus, the apparently implicitly held view that therapeutic processes change everyone in the same way toward a common outcome state seems untenable to us.

Rather, our data suggest that the picture is much more complex. Specifically, these findings support that:

(a) there is present among high school age adolescents a general psychosocial competence configuration. It involves their senses of self-efficacy, world attitudes (trust and social desirability orientation), and their style of coping with life events.

(b) yet even that configuration is nested within the context of their lives. Thus,

  (1) exemplary students are more active copers and more internal than marginal students.

  (2) black students are more active copers, more social desirability oriented, and more system blaming about prejudice than whites.

  (3) these differences interact, with white exemplary students being the most internal of all and black marginal students the most active copers.

(4) finally, internality (a sense of self-efficacy) is intercorrelated with other competence configuration attributes for exemplary students; it is not so intercorrelated for marginal students.

In sum, as these students enter counseling, they do exhibit a pattern of self-world-coping organization. That pattern is related to their overall effectiveness in the world, but also to their race. Being black and exemplary-or marginal-is different from being white and exemplary-or marginal.

(c) Change is a complex process. Further, it is not the same for everyone, and it is not uniform on everything at once. Thus,

(1) exemplary students changed more from counseling than did marginal students; and that change was general across the levels of the configuration from self-efficacy to coping style.

(2) black and white students changed differently. The black students entered the process as highly social desirability oriented and very active copers. They "relaxed" on both counts. Whites were very low on both and changed to become more socially oriented and more active copers.

(3) finally, attaining behavioral goals and gaining in one's sense of self-efficacy, at least over this short period of time, may be mutually exclusive goals. Further, which you accomplish seems to be a function of both your race and your exemplary-marginal status.

These results suggest that we are hardly in a position to say definitively what "being helped" therapeutically is, or whether all of these students were in fact "helped." It is clear, however, that they entered this common process differently, changed differently, and for at least some characteristics, gained on one apparently at the expense of the other. It is also clear that counselors will have unintended effects on their clients if they do not know and take cognizance of the differing life situation and personal characteristics of those clients.

(d) Counselors following a competence-oriented counseling approach produce more diverse patterns of change, not less.

Briefly, then, we feel that this project points to the need to study and consider <u>different</u> types of "positive" outcomes from therapy, and different patterns of change in therapy. It also demonstrates that a configural conception of psychosocial effectiveness is a useful and valid one. Yet our conception of what constitutes an ideal competence configuration needs to be tempered for individuals and for groups by an understanding of how they view their world, and what it takes to make sense of it.

References

Tyler, F. Adolescent competence: A different point of view. <u>Virginia Medical Monthly</u>, 1973, <u>100</u>, 919-926.

Slide 1

PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPETENCE
HIGH SCHOOL GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

CONCEPT OF THE COMPETENT SELF

Self-attitudes	World attitudes	Behaviors
Causally important Effective in the world Responsible when effects do not correspond to desire		
(At least moderately) favorable self-evaluation	Optimistic Trust	-Planning -Forbearance -Effort
Sense of self-efficacy	Hope	(No fatalism; passivity) (Realistic, goal setting) -Moderate challenges with intermediate probability of success -Active coping orientation high in initiative

vs.

Passive or defensive
Orientation characterized by very low goals or unrealistically high ones

Array of knowledge
habits
skills
abilities

(required to translate hopeful expectation and active orientation into effective behavior.)

SLIDE 2

PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPETENCE

HIGH SCHOOL GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

EVALUATION PLAN/RESEARCH DESIGN

	PRECOUNSELING ASSESSMENT	COUNSELING (8 weekly sessions)	POSTCOUNSELING ASSESSMENT
PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS	Self-Efficacy I-E (Rotter, Gurin) Trust Rotter Trust Coping Style Tyler Behavioral Attributes of Psychosocial Competence Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability	counseled	Rotter I-E Gurin I-E Trust BAPC Social Desirability
PROBLEMS SOLVED	Goal Setting Student Goal Attainment Scale Goal Counselor Goal Attainment Scale Discrepancy	controls	Goal Attainment Student GAS Counsleor GAS

SLIDE 3

PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPETENCE

HIGH SCHOOL GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

COUNSELOR-STUDENT-PHASE DESIGN MATRIX

	Students	Exemplary (N=4)	Marginal (N=4)
Phase I FALL 1973	Counseling Groups	2 White Males 2 White Females 2 Black Males 2 Black Females	2 White Males 2 White Females 2 Black Males 2 Black Females
	Control	1 White Male 1 White Female	1 White Male 1 White Female
	Students	Marginal (N=4)	Exemplary (N=4)
Phase II Spring 1974	Counseling Groups	(Same)	(Same)
	Control	(Same)	(Same)
DESIGN OF COMPETENCE-ORIENTED COUNSELING APPROACH			
	Students	Exemplary (N=5)	Marginal (N=4)
Phase III Spring 1975	Counseling Groups	(Same)	(Same)
	Students	Marginal (N=4)	Exemplary (N=3)
Phase IV FALL 1975	Counseling Groups	(Same)	(Same)

SLIDE 4

PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPETENCE

HIGH SCHOOL GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

PRE-POST CONFIGURAL ANALYSES
(Significant Effects)

	MAIN EFFECTS				TWO-WAY INTERACTIONS		
	GROUP		RACE				
	f	p	f	p	GROUP	X	RACE
MANOVA	2.13	.06+	8.22	.001***	2.29		.05*
RIE	6.07	.02*	.14	.71	6.28		.01**
GIE	1.08	.30	25.89	.001***	.01		.91
TRUST	.11	.74	.92	.34	.40		.53
SOC. DES.	1.19	.28	3.57	.06+	.88		.35
BAPC	5.38	.02*	5.74	.02*	8.31		.004**

INTERCORRELATIONS GROUPS

	EXEMPLARY				MARGINAL			
	GIE	TRUST	SOC. DES.	BAPC	GIE	TRUST	SOC. DES.	BAPC
RIE	.18*	-.30***	-.31***	-.45***	.05	.08	-.14	-.05
GIE		-.14	-.09	-.06		.10	-.09	.12
TRUST			.22**	.23**			.40***	.34***
SOC. DES.				.45***				.44***

\+ .10
* .05
** .01
*** .001

SLIDE 5

PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPETENCE

HIGH SCHOOL GROUP COUNSELING PROGRAM

GROUP X RACE CHANGES ON ROTTER I-E AND GAS

PRE-POST GAINS ON GOAL ATTAINMENT SCALING